

Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently amended) A ~~diagnostic test~~ method for testing for otitis media, comprising: positioning an ultrasound probe at a location spaced away from a tympanic membrane of a human patient, using ~~[[an]]~~ the ultrasound probe to detect the presence and measure the viscosity of middle ear effusion in ~~[[a]]~~ the human patient while the ultrasound probe is positioned at the location spaced away from the tympanic membrane; and comparing the measured viscosity of the middle ear effusion in the human patient with at least three predetermined values for effusion viscosity, wherein such comparison provides information regarding the likelihood of presence of bacterial infection in the middle ear effusion in the human patient.

8. (Currently amended) The ~~diagnostic test~~ method for testing of claim 7 wherein each of said predetermined values is based on a plurality of predetermined ranges of fluid viscosity measurements.

9-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently amended) A method for determining if a human patient is a candidate for receiving antibiotic treatment, wherein the presence of middle ear effusion in the patient is detected by an ultrasound probe that is positioned at a location spaced away from a tympanic membrane of the human patient and the ~~effusion~~ viscosity of the middle ear effusion is determined and compared with at least one predetermined fluid viscosity value.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently amended) An apparatus for determining ear fluid viscosity, the apparatus including:

a plurality of transducers, each adapted to transceive an ultrasonic signal to interact with a fluid-containing portion of the ear; and

means for using pulse echo amplitudes to determine whether the fluid in the ear is serous, purulent or mucoid while the plurality of transducers are positioned at a location spaced away from a tympanic membrane.

15. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the plurality of transducers are arranged in a curved array.

16. (Currently amended) A method of determining ear fluid viscosity, the method including: positioning a plurality of transducers at a location spaced away from a tympanic membrane,

operating a plurality of transducers while the plurality of transducers are positioned at the location spaced away from the tympanic membrane such that each transducer transceives an ultrasonic signal that interacts with a portion of an ear that contains fluid; and

using pulse echo amplitudes to determine whether the fluid in the ear is serous, purulent or mucoid.

17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of transducers are operated sequentially.

18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of transducers are operated simultaneously.

19. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the ultrasonic probe contains a plurality of transducers that are adapted to both transceive and receive an ultrasonic signal.

20. (New) The method of claim 12, wherein the ultrasonic probe contains a plurality of transducers that are adapted to both transceive and receive an ultrasonic signal.

21. (New) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the plurality of transducers is adapted to both transceive and receive an ultrasonic signal.

22. (New) The method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of transducers is adapted to both transceive and receive an ultrasonic signal.